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ABSTRACT

Proponents of and adherents to the home economics ideology have had, and still have, a clear emancipatory aim in establishing and maintaining their field of study. Home economics, however, has not been fairly or impartially dealt with in the literature either of the male-defined liberal arts or the emerging fields collectively labeled "women's studies." The place of women in the curriculum has been emerging for the past 20 years, according to a five-stage model postulated by Schuster and Van Dyne. In that model, the place of women evolves from the first stage, characterized by an absence of women that is not even noted, to the fifth stage, in which women's experiences and Sex Role; an ideal sixth stage, women's and men's experiences are understood together and are characterized by a transformed, gender-balanced curriculum. Home economics has a unique relationship to each of these categories. Each of the stages lends itself to the unique perspective and explanatory model provided by home economics as a "women's discipline"--a discipline, however, that is as generalizable to males as male-defined disciplines are to women. Home economics is a part of the social reality of women's education, and cannot be ignored by women scholars without violating the premise that women's history must be fully rounded to have validity. The new scholarship on women enters the curriculum not only through women's studies courses but also through home economics courses and curricula. (KC)

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EMANCIPATORY EDUCATION: IS HOME ECONOMICS THE MISSING LINK?

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"The world moves -- and we move with it."

Ellen H. Swallow-Richards

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"I looked with chameleon eyes upon the changing face of the world, looked with anonymous vision upon my uncompleted self."

Anais Nin

This paper seeks to make visible the invisible links between Home Economics and the emancipatory aspects of other educational enterprises -- most notably the liberal arts and Women's Studies. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines "emancipate" as (1) to free from restraint, influence, or the like, and (2) to free (a slave) from bondage. It defines "equity" as the quality of being fair or impartial. By these definitions, I hope to show first that proponents of and adherents to the Home Economics ideology had -- and still have -- a clear emancipatory aim in establishing and maintaining their field of study; and second that Home Economics has not been fairly or impartially dealt with in the literature either of the male-defined liberal arts or the emerging fields collectively labeled Women's Studies.

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This paper uses as its major departure point the article by Marilyn Schuster and Susan Van Dyne in the November, 1984 issue of the Harvard Educational Review titled "Placing Women in the Liberal Arts: Stages of Curriculum Transformation." Writing in a context devoid of reference to the Home Economics movement or the Home Economics curriculum, the authors accept the universe of education as one in which "woman's place" must accept as a "given" the organization of disciplines that today constitute the liberal arts. They then allude to the "postgraduate awakening" experienced by women students of the liberal arts.

POSTGRADUATE AWAKENING: A PERSONAL NOTE

From personal knowledge, the discontinuity between the education received in the 1940s at an elitist liberal arts college for women (Barnard) and the "real world" I entered as a "career girl" in the early 1950s and returned to as a "working wife and mother" in the 1960s was traumatic in both cases. Nothing in the liberal arts curriculum prepared me for the real world -- either as female worker or mother. It did, however, prepare me to work in the world of ideas as an editor, first of science fiction and "women's interest" magazines and later as an editor of the "Library of Liberal Arts," a series of scholarly texts. Later, as a social studies and Home Economics editor, I encountered in Home Economics a paradigm of education of which I had been totally unaware. Today I attribute that lack of awareness to socialization that devalued "woman's work." Thus I discovered Home Economics somewhat by accident. To understand it required resocialization. I now feel both frustrated and baffled by the total lack of interest in or even curiosity about Home Economics among both women and men in the liberal arts.

Women college graduates today as then do not enter the world after college without considerable postgraduate adjustment. Despite "progress," which is invariably measured by the numbers of women who enter fields previously dominated by men, the woman "liberal arts" graduate often finds herself consigned, despite assurances of "affirmative action," to places that -- in one way or another -- advance (or at least do not seriously challenge) the career aspirations of ambitious male colleagues. Even in academe, some highly placed women act as "handmaidens" to men who empower them to act. Such women often limit other women's access to the traditional bastions of male power. These women exercise power as men would in identical situations. They seek approval on the basis of a male derived value system. As other women climb the career ladder, they find a once-open door now "boarded up" when they arrive or find that they now need to reach an open door on the other side of the house. In other words, the rules of the game are changed even as women enter it.

Few women are free to act on their own terms, unless blessed either with powerful male relatives, mentors, or lovers or emancipated by virtue of inherited (and sometimes earned) independent wealth with its attendant social status. Legitimated power is still closely protected by men in male-dominated spheres. To be a man's "equal," a woman must occupy a role constructed by males and recognized by them as having value "in their image." However, roles are not "out there" in immutable forms waiting, like garments on a rack, to be tried on until one of them fits properly and "does justice" to the wearer. Roles are structured intersubjectively through communication and symbolic interaction -- both at the personal and the public level.

In retrospect, I believe that much of the liberal arts education I received fits women successfully for the public world as "surrogate men" and not on terms defined or even re-fined by women.

In adapting "received knowledge" to their private world, women trained in elitist liberal arts colleges soon find that such traditional knowledge does not come "packaged" for their use. It is packaged for the use of males in male-defined institutions and enterprises -- including the educational enterprise. The stock of knowledge labeled "liberal arts" is the socially constructed product of male minds. Its organization reflects the world as males experience it, interpret it, and communicate about it. It is the knowledge males use to control and achieve power. It is, for women, a kind of "second hand" knowledge they must acquire to compete for power as males define it. Women then must re-examine this supposedly "neutral" knowledge for a "missing text" -- the text of their own experience. Then they must interpret and communicate it in their own language and voice.

To be free, women must have the power to determine the knowledge they need and want in the form they want it. They must be free to create texts that will empower them from their own perspective. And they need to be in a position to demand that such knowledge remain free from interference on the part of those hostile to any redesign or reconstruction of the curriculum from a "frankly female" perspective, be it that of feminism, Women's Studies, or Home Economics. So subtle and so invidious are the early conditionings of patriarchy that many women accept their role in the manmade world without question. Feminist consciousness-raising over the past decades has been the most potent force counteracting this set of masculist assumptions. Women on a grand

scale are initiating and partaking in a profound woman-centered paradigm shift. Consciousness-raising as a unique feminist "way of knowing" has produced the shift from the unconscious acceptance of what was and is to the conscious choice to change what is to what will be. To accomplish this change, women must become empowered. Unfortunately, in the course of consciousness raising, many women have come to despise and reject what is regarded as "lowly" or "unworthy" of their talents and intelligence. This set of activities and attitudes is often lumped together as "woman's traditional role."

Women must still sift through mountains of irrelevant (for them), patriarchally structured data to gather some grains of truth relevant for their situation. Until this is changed, women cannot be said to be fully emancipated or genuinely empowered, either intellectually or economically.

THE SCHUSTER AND VAN DYNE MODEL

Women's Studies has had but two decades in which to examine issues within the traditional male-defined disciplinary frameworks. Schuster and Van Dyne lay out five stages of curricular change, and in each stage the key feature is the locus of women in the curricular context. Each stage is conceived of as making a significant step forward, a process that is moving toward the ideal of a gender-balanced curriculum. After a brief description of these stages, each will be examined from a point of view that acknowledges Home Economics.

The first stage is characterized by the absence of women -- an absence that is not even noted. In this stage, women are invisible. In the second stage, there is a search for missing women in order to produce a list of "lost greats" so that women will have in the

curriculum examples that will offset the impression that only men "achieve." Presumably, this will improve women's self-image and increase their ability to compete with men on an equal intellectual plane. Such women must still be positioned within male-defined categories (even in education) if they are to "fit." Women who are "misfits" continue to be ignored or placed in the wrong categories -- never in categories that they themselves define. Yet the categories into which women are placed in the curriculum still assume the appropriateness of male-defined categories in the liberal arts. The third stage recognizes women as a "disadvantaged subordinate group" and generates protests at the exclusion of women. In the fourth stage, women are studied on their own terms. This stage emphasizes an intellectual quest for the validation of women's experiences which fall outside existing paradigms. In the fifth stage, women's experiences and women's voices challenge the existing disciplines and their assumptions. Feminist theory begins to counterbalance existing masculist theory. In the sixth stage, women's and men's experiences are understood together and are characterized by a transformed gender balanced curriculum. The impact of such variables as class and race on the category of gender are dealt with. This transformative vision is inclusive, based on difference and diversity, and it eschews sameness and inappropriate generalizations. In this sixth stage, the disciplines are reconceptualized with the empowering of the student as a result. Each of these stages will be discussed with a "missing text" drawn from the Home Economics experience.

Home Economics: The "Missing Text" of the New Scholarship on Women

Home Economics has a unique relation to each of Schuster and Van

Dyne's categories. Admittedly, it does not "fit." But that should not be good and sufficient reason for women scholars to systematically ignore its existence or its relation to woman's lifeworld and education. The exclusion of Home Economics may appear to be based on some sort of unchallenged prior definition. But if we turn back to every prior definition of the "liberal arts," we cannot find any freed from a pre-existing masculist bias. Therefore, the exclusion of Home Economics must be based not on empirical premises, but (to put it generously) on ignorance.

Myrdal (1969) pointed out that ignorance, like knowledge, is seldom random but is instead highly opportunistic (p. 99). If knowledge of the Home Economics movement, philosophy, and curriculum has a bearing on women's education, its missing text needs to be made both visible and comprehensible. It is as certain for women, as it is for humankind in general, that if they are ignorant of their history, they will be condemned to repeat it. Myrdal says:

> the ethos of social science is the search for objective truth. This I consider not only a moral precept but also a description of the factual situation. Even if one begins with views distorted opportunistically on a particular problem, the pursuit of social research itself will gradually correct these views. (p. 40)

If Home Economics is a part of the social reality of women's education, it cannot be ignored by women scholars without violating the premise that to have validity women's history must be fully rounded. In her classic text, Woman as Force in History, Mary Beard paid close attention to the development of the concept of equity. As with other woman-centered enterprises, gender equity demands a stance of fairness and impartiality in dealing with Home Economics.

Each of Schuster and Van Dyne's descriptive categories lends itself

to the unique perspective and explanatory model provided by Home Economics as a "woman's discipline" -- a woman's discipline, however, that is as generalizable to males and as readily practiced by males as male-defined disciplines are by women. It is proposed that, absent a willingness to examine the history and intellectual thoughtliness of Home Economics, the treatment of women, their education, and their lifeworld will be profoundly distorted. Indeed, systematically to exclude Home Economics from discussions of women's issues poses a risk. The risk is that the bold visions of feminists and women scholars -- by virtue of their identification with the female gender -- will one day be subjected to the same processes of domination and oppression that operate today to hide and distort Home Economics.

Schuster and Van Dyne suggest that the new scholarship on women enters the curriculum primarily through Women's Studies courses. The point must also be made that it enters the curriculum -- both theoretically and practically -- through Home Economics courses and curricula (Thompson, 1984).

Stage 1: Invisible Women in Home Economics

One cannot examine either the Home Economics idea or the Home Economics curriculum without being struck by the fact that the metaphor of invisibility has unique relevance for the discipline. From its inception, Home Economics incorporated values, ideas, assumptions, and knowledge relevant for women and needed by them in order to develop their potential in their social world.

To be sure, if invisibility is part of the existential problem of women, as many agree, then Home Economics over the past two decades would be a winner in the invisibility sweepstakes. Coyner (1983)

identifies sexism as a source of the misinterpretation of Home Economics (p. 66). She points out that scholars in the Home Economics discipline (and, I might add, its subject matter specialties) do not fail to communicate with their colleagues. The rest of academia refuses to listen (p. 66).

Socrates deplored the advent of written language, believing it would destroy the oral tradition. With the possible exceptions of the oracle at Delphi, Diotima, and Sappho, we have no knowledge of the "wise women" or the "women teachers" of the classical period. The invisibility problem is one of long standing! However, ideas have a life of their own. And so it is with Home Economics. The Home Economics idea dates back to antiquity (Richarz, 1974; Costantakos, 1984). It deserves to become a part of a history of ideas. It might have, were it not for the fact that it is so closely tied to the lifeworld of women. The guiding question with respect to "invisibility" for Home Economics is to examine the processes entwined with women's lives that are themselves invisible. Furthermore, the processes are related to a knowledge base grounded in necessity and practicality. Such concerns have been consistently deprecated in the liberal arts.

Nurturing, sheltering, clothing, nourishing, and guiding lifespan human development are ongoing processes as well as ongoing human concerns. How can life processes be repudiated? What knowledge do they require? These activities have their major focus in families and households. They constitute the activities of the "private sphere" that in the past have been subordinated to those of the "public sphere." The fact that processes are invisible while products are visible is as important to our understanding of the social world as it is for our

understanding of the physical world. Home Economics deals more with process than with product. Linkages and relationships among invisible everyday processes connect the person both to the natural world and the social world.

In a discussion of the hermeneutical task, H. G. Gadamer notes:

> We must raise to a conscious level the prejudices which govern understanding and in this way realize the possibility that 'other aims' emerge in their own right from tradition -- which is nothing other than realizing the possibility that we can understand something in its otherness." (p. 156)

As the first discipline to make visible the "invisible world" of women, to recognize the order and pattern in the daily rounds of human existence, and to suggest that, if made the subject of serious study, they could be controlled for ethical and moral aims, early home economists took an intellectual leap -- with its attendant risks.

Thus there is a special poignancy to the invisibility problem as it relates to Home Economics. On the one hand, women scholars deplore the invisibility of women. On the other hand, they treat Home Economics --a "woman's field" that in 1984 celebrated 75 hard-won years of institutional existence --as though it were not even there. Home Economics slips between the cracks in academic discussions. Most often, people are satisfied to grapple with the superficial issue of name, without realizing the power of naming as a unique problem associated with women's invisibility and powerlessness.

East (1984) notes:

> An examination of literature reviews in medicine, sociology, chemistry, and history, in subjects such as gerontology, housing preferences, cooking, and women and the family, reveals no reference to research and work done by home economists. The research does exist. Why was home economics not mentioned? (p. 3)

As East concludes, visibility is an important piece of a life as a

scholar and researcher. For the SIG/Research on Women in Education, AERA's Division B, and Home Economics, this Symposium represents a historic first in rejecting the mantle of invisibility. Formation of a SIG on Home Economics Research (HERSIG) at this meeting is a political act to further repudiate the invisibility of Home Economics in the educational universe.

As a stage of transformation, the search for missing women has been largely guided by "teasing out" women from the shadows of the disciplines and professions in which they operated -- apparently with acceptance and success in earlier time periods. However, this quest has been structured by notions of "success" related to male-defined disciplinary and professional categories. Home Economics -- as a continuous and unbroken ideological enterprise -- has often been "invaded" in this search.

Placing Home Economics and home economists either into preconceived categories established by men or in boxes marked "other" when a scholar or researcher is asked to identify her or his discipline, disadvantages the individual who sees in Home Economics the intellectual home she or he seeks. Home Economics is its own category. Home economists are a category of thinkers. They think about women, families, and households. They think about their material, social, and ethical wellbeing. They are not advocates for "housekeeping." They work within a different set of epistemological categories -- the "leftovers," one might say, of the academic feast. They look for those invisible scraps that other scholars have ignored or discarded, partially because of their preconceived ideas of what has value for the categories of knowledge that have been designated the "liberal arts." They connect this

knowledge in unique ways. Thus they are engaged not only in the evaluation of knowledge from an epistemic and empirical perspective but also in the valuation of knowledge as it relates to the lifeworld of women. This valuation is an ethical and moral enterprise grounded in a female view of humanity and its concerns. We must look backwards in time to hear that "different voice" that Carol Gilligan (1977; 1982) has noted in women's structuring of moral questions. It is not merely invisibility Home Economics must address, but voicelessness as well. Women may no longer be invisible --but we have little evidence that their message is audible! Home Economics has been both invisible and inaudible. Moreover, other women's voices have not been heard in its defense as gender equity would seem to require.

At the Fifth Lake Placid Conference (1903), one of the "missing women," Dean Sarah Louise Arnold of Simmons College said of Home Economics:

> We have come upon an altogether new classification of knowledge, and, as we attempt to build a curriculum we discover that the extension of knowledge everywhere affects us too. We are part and parcel of all the rest. Obviously, we have adopted for ourselves an empirical classification of the schools. Since we cannot compass all knowledge and include all subjects in our curriculum, is it not the part of wisdom for us to limit our subjects to certain essentials, certain fundamentals, and gather closely about these the related knowledge which science and art have made available for us? (p. 10)

She continues:

> Shall we, then, plunder the various fields and call them ours, or shall we acknowledge ourselves as gleaners in the fields where others have sown, where others have reaped the harvest? Shall we set up an original and individual course of study, or shall we, rather, set up a goal to be reached and learn to those who have trodden other paths to their separate goals how we may reach our desired end?

Dean Arnold delineates the relation of the new field of study to the liberal arts:

> The first foundation for the teacher of household economics is a liberal education, which will enable her to recognize these relations, to glean from every field that which is necessary for her garner. Her function is not that of the original discoverer. She must apply to her province, the home, that which others have learned in their special fields of science or art. The time for a course in household economics, then, if after a liberal education .... Without such an education, she must fail to comprehend the true relation of her province to the knowledge of the world. (p. 11)

Clearly, we must include in our search for missing women a search for lost ideas as well.

Stage 3: Women as a Subordinate Group

Home Economics is often cited as a field that leads to the subordination of women -- not to their empowerment. This is a thorny point. In Schuster and Van Dyne's conceptualization of this third stage, one question asked is, "Why are women's traditional roles (or forms of expression) devalued?" In its early years, when it was variously identified as Domestic Science, Domestic Economy, or Household Economy, Home Economics was the only field of study focused on the private sphere. Feminists and Women's Studies scholars seem to misread the Home Economics message. Home Economics had its modern impetus in the mid-19th century whose humanitarian ethos gave rise to anti-slavery sentiments and the abolitionist movement. Both the Home Economics movement and the abolitionist movement were suffused with moral indignation that any class of people be denied opportunities for full human treatment. Both were, at base, emancipatory movements. Suffragists turned their energies to securing the vote for women. Abolitionists turned theirs to the emancipation of the slaves. The same minds that argued for the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves also advocated Domestic Science and Domestic Economy as curricula designed for women.

We must reexamine some early texts to better understand whether they intend to subordinate or emancipate. We are speaking here of Catherine Beecher and her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe. Some scholars have expressed disdain for Beecher's proposal, namely that woman's roles be elevated to one of equal importance to man's. This is an argument for gender equity. It is, as I have said elsewhere, an argument for "comparable worth." Feminists have faulted Catherine Beecher and later Ellen Swallow-Richards for their failure to support woman suffrage. To appreciate the women in the Home Economics movement requires that they be understood in their "otherness." One should examine not what they failed to support but ask what they chose to support. Beecher and Swallow-Richards believed that women could be empowered through education. They also advocated a specific kind of education to prepare women and men for intelligent, informed, and morally defensible action in the private sphere. They did not assume that the norms of the public sphere could be carried over into the private sphere. To do so would impose on women behavioral norms acceptable to and for males. Women in Home Economics did not share the view that the personal, private sphere was designed by men to exploit and oppress women. They viewed it as a protected sphere. They did not deny that women were often subordinated, oppressed, mistreated, and abused. But they did not attribute this to the institution of the family. We should consider an alternative possibility, namely that women accepted, and perhaps even defined, the domestic sphere as the one in which they and their children could be protected from brutish, violent, and rapacious males. Doesn't our current data on spouse and child abuse and incest make this explanatory theory equally plausible? Moreover, given the patriarchal society in

which they lived, this argument gives women some credit for being active in their own and their children's interests.

Catherine Beecher laid out the first generalized knowledge system essential for the lifeworld of women in The Treatise on Domestic Economy (1841). In the Treatise, Beecher addressed the question of what decides the equity of any law or institution. She says:

> In this Country, it is established, both by opinion and by practice, that woman has an equal interest in all social and civil concerns; and that no domestic, civil, or political institution, is right, which sacrifices her interest to promote that of the opposite sex. But in order to secure her the more firmly on all these privileges, it is decided, that, in the domestic relation, she takes a subordinate station, and that, in civil and political concerns, her interests be entrusted to the other sex, without her taking any part in voting, or in making and administering laws. (p. 27)

> It is in America, alone, that women are raised to an equality with the other sex; and that, both in theory and practice, their interests are regarded as of equal value. (p. 33)

In setting forth her reason for introducing Domestic Economy in the schools, Beecher was presenting an educational model for the private sphere that complemented that of Political Economy -- the male defined education for the public sphere. In the Treatise, Beecher was re-writing the social contract on more favorable terms for women. The contract does not make women subservient, it encourages wives to accept subordinate status on the condition that males behave decently toward them and secure for them equitable treatment under the laws that males negotiate in the public sphere. In other words, men were to earn this deference by representing women's interests fairly and impartially -- i.e., by being "gentlemen." It was a mutual trust. To suggest that those who espoused Domestic Economy did so for the purpose of subordinating women ignores the quid pro quo in Beecher's argument. The sad fact is that this "gentlemen's agreement" has not been honored. The

model of the gentleman (as in "scholar and gentleman") broke down under the 20th century model of the entrepreneur, for whom "taking advantage" was the accepted code of conduct. The reasons for this go well beyond the scope of this paper to analyze.

Later in the Victorian era, in 1869, a young woman named Ellen Henrietta Swallow began her college career at age 26. At that time, advanced education for women was not generally available. Her family, friends, and neighbors were not sure what would come of the young woman's attendance at the newly opened Vassar Female Institute. Young Miss Swallow studied with the astronomer Maria Mitchell at Vassar and also became fascinated with the study of chemistry. Most people felt that a woman's place was not in gazing at the stars or through microscopes. Her sphere was the home and family. The young lady wrote a reassuring letter to her mother:

> my aim is now, as it has been for the past ten years, to make myself a true woman, one worthy of the name, and one who will not unshrinkingly follow the path which God marks out, one whose aim is to do all she can in the world and not be one of the delicate little dolls or the silly little fools who make up the bulk of American women, slaves to society and fashion. (Tate, p. 349)

The young woman who wrote these words would later enter M.I.T. where she became the first woman ever to gain entry to such a highly scientific education in the United States. She later taught at M.I.T. and married Robert Richards, an M.I.T. professor. Swallow-Richards lived her entire life as though she were following her youthful credo. She became a prime mover in founding the American Home Economics Association in 1909 and served as its first president. Swallow-Richards committed herself for a decade to the annual Lake Placid Conferences, attending all but one. And at every conference she attended, she communicated her unwavering conviction that a field of study with new subject

arrangements needed to be established. One would have to say that the establishment of the discipline of Home Economics was the culmination of her intellectual life as a scientist and humanitarian and not some isolated event. Given Ellen Swallow-Richards' accomplishments, we must ask what she meant by making herself a "true woman."

We must look at both Beecher and Swallow-Richards as women who are part of a long tradition, including the women on this Symposium, who have "bought in" to the ideology of Home Economics, not to be "happy homemakers" or to teach "housekeeping" but, rather, to continue the philosophical orientation of the discipline of Home Economics and to share this vision with others who are -- for the present -- mostly female students.

If, as Schuster and Van Dyne say, in this stage we must discover "the valuable truths about women's experience, relative to men's" (p. 424) we cannot proceed in ignorance of Home Economics.

Stage 4: Women Studied on Their Own Terms

I have already hinted at the attempts of home economists to maintain Home Economics as a discipline "on its own terms." Schuster and Van Dyne say that:

> The second major movement in women's studies courses and in feminist scholarship, especially in the humanities and the social sciences, has been to delineate the character of women's experience as women themselves have expressed it. (p. 424)

It is unlikely that there is any extant discipline that more surely addresses the question of an "insider's perspective" on woman's lifeworld than does Home Economics. To deny the boundaried world of the family and the household as possessing unique explanatory power for women's experience could hardly be sustained in any rational dialogue. Cebik (1974) observed that:

> If women's studies means courses designed to explore the theoretical and research literature traditionally omitted from the university curriculum, then home economics is already well established in this new field. (p. 30)

In the same time period Lopate (1974), commenting on the "irony" of the Home Economics movement, concluded that the socializing power of the Home Economics curriculum had been surpassed by the broadcast media. She also noted that the movement had created a system of attitudes and behaviors that few women or men had begun to analyze. This is still true in the feminist and Women's Studies literature. Home economists, however, have been mindful of the intellectual currents of the contemporary women's movement and have responded to the challenge of changed conditions in society, the family, and the household.

Recent feminist scholarship (Miller, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1977, 1982; Elshtain, 1981) has introduced new perspectives on the work of the private sphere and the voicelessness and invisibility of women. Such work helps to explain the anomalous position of Home Economics in relation to feminist and Women's Studies. We must begin to integrate these three perspectives for their potential synergism. Otherwise, feminists will be left with too narrow an ideological ground to defend on behalf of "all" women, and Women's Studies scholars will have no perspective from which to integrate the fast-fragmenting conceptual frameworks and changing paradigms of the liberal arts.

Stage 5: Women as a Challenge to the Disciplines

By proposing a new discipline in 1908, the founders of Home Economics -- mainly women joined by a few similarly minded men -- in effect challenged the exclusive hold of the liberal arts on the post-secondary curriculum. In this, they were to have the resources of the Land Grant institutions rather than the elitist Eastern colleges to

support them.

With the founding of the American Home Economics Association in 1908, Home Economics introduced its name to the world. Its "power to name" has, over the years, been repeatedly challenged. Rather than examine the profound ways in which the ideology of Home Economics challenges the extant disciplines, efforts are made to establish credibility by changing the name. This unique existential problem vis a vis the disciplines needs further study from the perspective of feminist theory.

Traditionally, Home Economics has addressed curricular issues with the goal of integrating the humanities, physical sciences, and social sciences in solving the perennial problems inherent in the human condition. Because of this underlying premise, feminist studies and Women's Studies may, in the near future, find their most responsive curricular home in Home Economics. Perhaps it is an oversimplification to suggest that all feminists and women scholars challenge the disciplines in which they work. Home economists often do. For this, they pay a heavy penalty and are placed in a kind of intellectual limbo. Home Economics has asked different questions from a different perspective and in a different voice.

Home Economics, historically and contemporaneously, is uniquely positioned for the reconceptualization of the disciplines discussed by women scholars such as Karen Mazza (1983). Its curriculum is a first line of entry for changed conceptualizations of woman's lifeworld --both in the past and in the present. It's knowledge system focuses on perennial problems that demand a changing information base. Choosing Home Economics as one's discipline and Home Economics education as one's

vocation in no way alienates home economists from feminists and Women's Studies advocates. Conversely, being a home economist should not automatically mean "back of the bus" treatment by those in other academic fields. As Schuster and Van Dyne say:

> Recognizing the gendered nature of all texts allows us to recuperate material that, in our earlier anger, seemed corrupt or false and teach it in a new light (p. 426).

Schuster and Van Dyne's comment is of special moment to Home Economics. It should signal a retrieval of Home Economics texts, syllabi, curricula, and position papers and an appreciation of them in their otherness. Further, having "uncovered the error that most material on the conventional syllabus is derived from male experience and is erroneously generalized to represent the human condition" (p. 426), suggests that we may examine Home Economics to see how it contributes to expanded understanding. We must subject Home Economics texts to hermeneutic analysis informed by the research and theory of women scholars in the liberal arts disciplines. Schuster and Van Dyne remark that, "This stage unequivocally means a loss of old certainties." And is not one of these "old certainties" that Home Economics is an outdated and irrelevant curriculum for today's liberally educated women and men?

Stage 6: The Transformed or "Gender Balanced" Curriculum

The concept of "balance" relates to the concepts of "equality" and "equity" that are beyond our present purpose to explore. Elsewhere I have addressed the question of Home Economics as a knowledge system -- not a gender system (Thompson, 1984b). In historical perspective, Home Economics was nothing more and nothing less than a bold attempt to transform the curriculum and to provide a "curriculum of connection"

that retrieved from the male dominant paradigms those concepts and facts that had special relevance for woman's lifeworld -- i.e., the home, the family, and the household.

Carver (1979) concluded a short history of Home Economics, saying:

> The history of home economics has been one of constantly developing aims. During the time when rapid technological and social changes affecting individual and families were taking place, the Lake Placid Conference planners (1899-1908) emerged from such separate fields as biochemistry, economics, nutrition, sanitation, and human development to begin a ten-year search for a common area of study that would respond to the problems facing all human beings. These scholars identified the family as the central focus for this new field, which came to be known as home economics. (p. 43)

Stage 7: a Holistic, Integrated Model

Home Economics goes beyond the model of a "balanced curriculum" and has worked over eight decades toward an integrative curriculum in which the perspectives of women and men are drawn together to provide a rounded, three-dimensional, synergestic view of human experience in all its complexity. It is no field for the meek these days. The foundation of Home Economics has been and continues to be the so-called liberal arts. But Home Economics examines the liberal arts with considerable insight from the so-called practical arts, the folk arts -- and also the "anonymous arts" of housewifery!

The generalizability of what is learned in the subject matter categories of Home Economics after a solid grounding in the liberal arts testifies to the difficulty women have when they attempt to introduce and maintain "gender balanced" education from their perspective rather than from one that perpetuates masculist categories as a precondition for balance. One problem feminists have not confronted with respect to Home Economics is the extent to which it deals with the kind of knowledge needed to free human beings to live as fully human persons.

Home Economics involves more than the acquisition of re-defined male knowledge. It addresses knowledge problems of a different order. It may even tap into a system of knowledge and a kind of learning lodged in a different area of the map of human intelligence.

In pursuing its integrative aims, Home Economics seeks a unified vision of the knowledge needed for everyday life. In addition, it seeks the meanings inherent in constructing this lifeworld through the choices we make each day. Metaphors for women's work abound. However, none have yet had the general force of metaphors invented to perpetuate masculist perspectives. The sexism of our language is a major concern of feminist study. And Home Economics is uniquely vulnerable to linguistic distortions (Costantakos, 1984). Voice and vocabulary are inextricably intertwined. Perhaps the most recent metaphor to emerge for the anonymous and invisible processes inherent in the lives of women is our increased appreciation for quilts, quilters, and quilting. The quilter, traditionally, takes fragments and bits of cloth -- discarded scraps. They are "scraps" for which no other use may be found. Too small and insignificant to be made into vests, britches, coats, or skirts, they are turned instead to other purposes. The artifact is invested with enormous communicative and symoblic power, as the recent musical play Quilters attests. The "value" of the quilt cannot be equated with "money" alone. The creativity, originality, and personal meaning invested in quilts are part of the symbolic capital of women.

The foundation of Home Economics as a discipline will always be in the liberal arts -- and in any other emerging disciplines that can inform its praxis. Without a solid grounding in the relevant knowledge drawn from the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical

sciences, how can any holistic view of the human condition be developed? Without a holistic view of the human condition, how can emanicipatory education be designed? To the extent that both the gender of the researcher, the gender of the disseminator, and the gender of the user play a role in the creation and utilization of knowledge, women scholars and home economists must work collaboratively to achieve an integrative transformation that puts to human service the best, the brightest, and the most fully humanized knowledge available.

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ABSTRACT

Without a willingness to include the history and thoughtlines of Home Economics, the treatment of women, their lifeworld, and their education will be profoundly distorted. This paper examines the anomalous position of Home Economics -- a "women's discipline" -- in relation to the new scholarship on women and the transformation of the liberal arts curriculum. The link must be made between women's lifeworld, education, and the Home Economics discipline in order to round out our knowledge of women's empowerment through emancipatory education -- dating back to the publication of Catherine Beecher's Treatise on Domestic Economy (1841).

Taking as a departure point Schuster and Van Dyne's "Placing Women in the Liberal Arts: Stages of Curriculum Transformation" (Harvard Educational Review, Nov. 1984), Thompson addresses questions concerning the "invisibility" of Home Economics in current works on women and education. Pointing out that Home Economics is a "misfit" in male-defined disciplinary categories because it establishes its own categories for study, Thompson discloses aspects of the discipline that have a bearing on feminist and Women's Studies research and theory. Home Economics is presented as part of the "missing text" of women's experience and intellectual history.